

SPECIAL REPORT

SAFETY



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MAY10, 2001

REVISED AND
UPDATED

THE BUSH BUDGET SHORTCHANGES
LAW ENFORCEMENT/SCHOOL
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– Revised and Updated Version of Special Report –

President Bush ran for office calling himself a compassionate conservative. Most Americans assumed that meant he would work to reduce crime on the streets and to make our schools safer places for our children to learn.

However, in looking at his budget, Bush is undermining efforts that have been successful in cutting crime. Bush is proposing to cut the COPS program which has successfully put 85,000 more cops on the street over the past 6 years. Further, he is freezing funding for programs that are key to improving school safety and preventing juvenile crime – the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants for after-school programs.

Significant Cuts in COPS Program

Overall, the Bush budget cuts the Justice Department by \$1.5 billion in FY 2002 below the level needed to maintain constant purchasing power, and \$17.8 billion below over 10 years. These cuts are largely applied to state and local law enforcement assistance programs.

In particular, the Bush budget proposes to severely scale back the COPS program – a key force in fighting crime over the last six years. Overall, the Bush budget provides \$855 million for the COPS program, a \$172 million cut below the 2001 freeze level. The budget targets the cuts on COPS grants used for hiring new community police officers. The Bush budget slashes funds for police hiring by \$271 million (46%) below the 2001 freeze level from \$591 million to \$320 million.

These cuts come as no surprise as Bush opposed the community policing program on the campaign trail.

“[Republican Presidential Candidate George W. Bush] said he would seek to eliminate the President’s COPS initiative, which has spent billions of federal dollars to help local governments hire thousands of police officers. ... ‘I don’t think that [the COPS program] is a federal initiative...,’ Bush said. ‘I view [the COPS program] as focus-group politics that breaches the role of what the federal government should do.’”

– Los Angeles Times, 8/13/00

The COPS program is based on community policing which has proven to be an effective crime fighting strategy because it emphasizes putting more officers on the beat, and establishing partnerships between police and the neighborhood in order to prevent crime. Bush is proposing cuts, even though the COPS program has funded more than 110,000 police officers. It has provided police departments with more than \$9 billion in federal funds to help put an estimated 85,000 new officers on the streets over the past six years in more than 12,000 law enforcement agencies. The funds cover 75% of the salaries for three years, then the local departments pick up the full costs. Today, because of the COPS Program, 87% of the nation is served by law enforcement which conducts community policing. Thanks in part to the COPS program, crime has decreased for an unprecedented eight straight years and is at its lowest level since 1968.

Recognizing the extraordinary success of the COPS program, and the resulting reduction in crime rates nationwide, Democrats offered an amendment at the Budget Committee mark-up to fund the COPS program, but every Republican voted against. The amendment would have continued current funding for the COPS program, and provided funding for an additional 100,000 police officers through FY 2011.

Failing to Improve School Safety

Instead of working to improve school safety and to stop juvenile crime, the President's Budget freezes funding for the Safe and Drug-Free School Program and the after-school program – the primary federal programs for improving school safety – and cuts funding for several initiatives aimed at preventing school violence. In total, these reductions would affect services to nearly 500,000 students.

Specifically, the Bush budget proposes the following on school violence prevention and safety.

- **Freezes funding for 21st Century After School Centers.** The Bush budget freezes this program, which provides quality safe and educational after-school opportunities at a critical time of day. On school days, 3-6 P.M. are the peak hours for teens to commit crimes, kids to become crime victims, and for kids to smoke, drink, use drugs, or have sex; in fact, violent juvenile crime suddenly triples after school. Experts note the importance of after-school programs to reducing teen crime; a recent survey of police chiefs showed that nine out of ten chiefs said America could greatly reduce crime by expanding educational child care programs and after-school programs. However, under the Administration's proposal, 300 fewer after-school centers and 56,000 fewer children would be funded in FY 2002 compared to FY 2001. The Bush budget gives fewer children after-school services, despite the fact that the number of children and teens whose need for after-school programs is unmet likely exceeds eleven million.
- **Freezes funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools.** The Bush budget freezes funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program --the major federal program dedicated to funding school programs to combat alcohol and drug use and violent behavior. Safe and Drug-Free Schools funds have been used for a wide variety of purposes – ranging from the highly-regarded Drug Awareness and Resistance

Education program (DARE) to the installation of metal detectors to the hiring of security guards. Within the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program (SDFS), the Bush budget cuts the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative by \$69 million (59%). This school violence prevention initiative helps school districts to develop comprehensive violence prevention initiatives based on proven strategies in collaboration with the mental health and law enforcement agencies. Further, as part of SDFS, the President's budget cuts funding for middle school drug/violence prevention coordinators by 50%, down to \$25 million. As a result, approximately 400 middle schools serving approximately 330,000 students would be denied funding for prevention coordinators. Research shows that school violence prevention efforts are most effective when districts have a dedicated staff person to coordinate prevention programs in the schools.

- **School Counselors.** The Bush budget terminates the School Counselors Program, which helps schools to hire the counselors they need to give every student someone to whom they can turn. Ending this program would eliminate approximately 434 school counselors serving approximately 109,000 students. Nationally, there is a need to double the current number of school counselors to meet the recommended ratio of 250 students per counselor.

The fact that the Bush budget in effect scales back school violence prevention efforts comes as no surprise. Republicans for the past several years have worked to block grant and scale back funding for both the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and after-school programs. Even though there have been three school shootings in his first 100 days in office, President Bush, apparently, rather than leaving no child behind, will join congressional Republicans to leave many kids behind in unsafe schools.